

sought to emigrate to the United States. To obtain a passport, Mr. Glaser was forced to sign a statement renouncing any future claims to his home. In 1954, Mr. Glaser became an American citizen; in 1962, the communist Czech Government officially recorded the expropriation of Mr. Glaser's home in the land records.

In 1982, the United States and Czechoslovakia signed an agreement that settled the property loss claims of all American citizens against Czechoslovakia. The U.S. Government agency charged with carrying out the settlement advised Mr. Glaser that, because he was a Czechoslovak citizen when his property was taken—according to the U.S. Government, this occurred in 1948 when Mr. Glaser was forced under duress to relinquish the rights to his house—he was not eligible to participate in the claims settlement program but must rather seek redress for his property loss under Czech laws.

When the post-communist Czech Republic passed a property restitution law in 1991, Peter Glaser filed his claim. In a cruel irony, despite presenting documentation from the U.S. Government attesting to the fact that Mr. Glaser was not eligible to participate in the U.S.-Czechoslovakia claims settlement program, the Czech Courts have repeatedly rejected his claim on the grounds that he was an American citizen at the time his property was taken—which, according to the Czech Government, occurred in 1962. The Czech Government asserts that Mr. Glaser's claims were settled and should have been compensated under the 1982 agreement. In other words, the current Czech Government and courts have adopted the communist fiction that although Mr. Glaser's property was expropriated in 1948, somehow the confiscation did not count until 1962, when the communists got around to the nicety of recording the deed.

This rationalization by Czech authorities looks like a back door attempt to avoid restitution. The reality of what happened to the property in Zatec is clear: Peter Glaser lost his home in 1948 when a totalitarian regime claimed the rights to his house in exchange for allowing him to leave the oppression and persecution of communist Czechoslovakia. As the Czech Government knows, communist expropriations—whether effectuated by sweeping land reform laws, as a condition or punishment for emigration, or under other circumstances—frequently went unrecorded in land registries, but that did not make the loss any less real for the victims. For the Czech Government today to cling to technicalities, such as the date the communists officially recorded their confiscation in the land registry, as a means to avoid returning Peter Glaser's home is a sobering indication of the Czech Government's true commitment to rectifying the wrongs of its communist past.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of property restitution is complex. No easy solutions exist to the many questions that restitution policies raise. Nonetheless, when a country chooses to institute a restitution or compensation program, international norms mandate that the process be just, fair and nondiscriminatory. The Czech Government has failed to live up to these standards in the cases I cited.

The Czech Government must end the discrimination against Czech Americans in the restitution of private property. Moreover, the rule of law must be respected. I call on the

Czech Government to reconsider its disposition in the Benda and Glaser cases. Czech officials often say that aggrieved property claimants can seek redress in the courts for unfavorable decisions. However, when claimants do just that, as did Peter Glaser and Susan Benda, the Czech Government asserts outrageous or technical defenses to thwart the rightful owner's claim or simply refuses to accept a decision in favor of the claimant. Fortunately, Mr. Glaser, Ms. Benda, and others like them, have pledged to fight on despite mounting costs and legal fees that they will never recoup. The passion and determination of Peter Glaser and Susan Benda, as of all victims of fascism and communism in Central and Eastern Europe, reveal that what may look to some as a battle for real estate is ultimately a search for justice and for peace with the past.

IN HONOR OF THE UNION COUNTY COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN AND THE WINNERS OF THE 1999 WOMEN OF EXCELLENCE AWARD

HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 15, 1999

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Union County Commission on the Status of Women and the winners of the 1999 Women of Excellence award. This organization was established in September, 1989, and has dedicated itself to ensuring that women in Union County are treated fairly in the workplace. They continue to provide information and support to women that affects not only my district, but the whole state of New Jersey.

By providing this information to a number of governmental agencies, the Union County Commission on the Status of Women has played a central role in attaining and maintaining equality for women. They advise the Board of Chosen Freeholders in the policy and decisionmaking process of County government, recommend programs to promote the expansion of rights and opportunities available to women in Union County, and originate and implement comprehensive programs to meet the special needs, interests, and concerns of the women of Union County.

To accomplish this necessary and important task, the organization has consistently sought out the best and the brightest people to help them achieve their goals. They have been so successful in this venture that this year, twelve women are singled out for their drive, motivation, and accomplishment in guaranteeing that the rights of the women of Union County are protected. And, as they were singled out by the Commission, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize these women once again for their work and dedication:

Business—Nora Holley MacMillan of Summit

Community Service—Nancy Terrezza of Union Township

Education—Roberta T. Feehan of Elizabeth Government—Charlotte DeFilippo of Hillside Government—Senator Wynona M. Lipman of Newark

Health Care—Hazel H. Garlic of Elizabeth Journalism/Public Relation—Adele Kenny of Fanwood

Law—Judge Susan M. McMullan of Westfield

Law Enforcement—Sergeant Nancy McKenzie of Rahway

Volunteerism—Glenda Magloire of Union County

Women's Advocacy—Mayor Geri Samuel of Scotch Plains

Women's Advocacy—Nellie Suggs of Westfield.

These women exemplify leadership and dedication to both Union County and the community at large. For these tremendous contributions to New Jersey and their incredible example as public servants, I am very happy to honor these individuals for their achievements. I salute and congratulate all of them on their extraordinary accomplishments.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. CHARLES H. TAYLOR

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 15, 1999

Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, due to inclement weather I was unavoidably detained in North Carolina this morning and was therefore unable to cast a vote on rollcall Votes 34, 35 and 36. Had I been present, I would have voted "YEA" on rollcall 34, "YEA" on rollcall 35 and "YEA" on rollcall 36.

HONORING MS. RITA SCHWARTZ

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 15, 1999

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Ms. Rita Schwartz, for her exemplary community service, and for her numerous contributions to the Brooklyn community.

Ms. Rita Schwartz is the Director of Government Relations for the General Contractors Association of New York Inc., a trade organization representing the heavy construction industry. She is responsible for developing and implementing legislative and community strategies for the funding and building of the city's infrastructure system and is active politically in City Hall, Albany, and Washington. Ms. Schwartz is committed to developing opportunities for women and minorities in the construction industry and is involved in several organizations to help these groups gain access to various career opportunities.

Ms. Schwartz has served in the public sector for many years as Supervisor for Government Relations and Community Affairs with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. She was responsible for government and community relations and represented the Port Authority with civic, business, community groups and elected officials. In addition, she coordinated special projects and events and had an additional responsibility as Director of Homeless Service Programs for the Port Authority. Before working for the Port Authority, Ms. Schwartz was with the New York City Department of the Aging, the Health and Hospitals Corporation and the New York City Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs.